2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

division between nature and society was expressed in a variety of ways. Clearest perhaps was the ethical prescription that while it is evil for a Badaga to kill people he does good in the eyes of the community *and of God* if he kills Kurumbas or tigers, 'since these are both murderers' (as the matter was once explained to me). The Badagas have always been what would popularly be termed a most superstitious people: they suspect the sorcerer's artifice behind every noise in the jungle, every unexplained malady, every strange event; and they glean a multitude of tidings, both good and bad, from the everyday behaviour of snakes, crows, jackals, cattle and dozens of other creatures and conditions that surround them. A further indication of the gulf between nature and society is perhaps that in their pre-British law the severest Badaga punishment short of hanging was ostracism—expulsion from the village; and this was reserved for the enormity of incest.[2]

For an Indian peasant society the Badagas have some quite extraordinary features, fit to provide enough exotica for any undergraduate anthropology course. This fact has not been duly appreciated by the dozens of ethnologists who have come to the Nilgiris and attached themselves with passion to the colourful Todas or the shy jungle tribes. The Badagas may outwardly appear a much more 'typical' Indian farming community, and yet they do not have true subcastes or multicaste villages; they practise hypergamy *and* hypogamy even across the vegetarian boundary; several forms of polygamy are acceptable; they have a sort of young men's house; marriage is permitted across generation levels to the point where a man may in theory marry a woman *and* her daughter *and* her mother simultaneously, and villages hold a memorial ceremony once in fifty years when every member of a generation has died. Add to these features the frequent ghost exorcisms, fire-walking and occasional massacres, and the anthropologist has much to explain.

THE TERRAIN

The Nilgiri Hills, also known as the Blue Mountains, constitute a massif some 1500 sq. km. in area, situated in southern India at the juncture of the three linguistic and cultural areas of Karnatak Malabar and Tamilnad. In the British period it was an administrative unit of the Madras Presidency. Today the Nilgiris form on

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

small district of Tamil Nadu, altogether covering 2543 sq. km. This is the homeland of the Badaga, Toda, Kota and Kurumba communities; nowadays numerous other peoples also live there.

The plateau is generally in the elevation of 2000–2500 m., and one peak, Doddabetta, among the highest in peninsular India, reaches 2633 m. In contrast to this the western quarter of the district averages around 1000 m. in elevation and forms a major portion of the Wainad Plateau. The main indigenous communities there are the Panias, Kurumbas, Nayakas and Chettis, but there are also a few Badagas (Wainad Gaudas) and Kotas.

The escarpment of the Nilgiri Plateau falls away very steeply, and on the eastern edge actually drops some 2000 m. in about 3 km. These slopes always have been covered in dense subtropical jungle which harbours tigers, leopards, buffaloes, elephants, snakes and malarial mosquitoes, and formerly dangerous hunting tribes still feared for their sorcery. Until the advent of the British early in the nineteenth century the three communities living on the summit of these hills—Badagas, Kotas and Todas—were therefore extremely isolated.

The undulating, unevenly wooded downland making up the entire plateau experiences considerable variation in rainfall. The Nilgiris receive from 60 to 160 inches of rain annually, depending on the topographical aspect. Western parts of the plateau rely mainly on the southwest monsoon in July and August; the eastern parts derive much of their rain from the northeastern monsoon in October-December. The average mean daily temperature in the centre of the plateau is around 15°C, while in the Wainad the climate is much hotter and wetter.

For the mildly invigorating qualities of its climate the plateau is therefore scarcely rivalled anywhere in the Asian tropics, and from 1819 British residents began to take advantage of this healthful region. Soon the towns of Coonoor, Kotagiri and Ootacamund (the district headquarters), and the military station at Wellington, took shape and expanded. More recently the town of Gudalur (Gudalu:ru) has grown up in the Wainad, at the foot of the western escarpment. Ootacamund, Coonoor and Gudalur are now the headquarters of the three administrative divisions or *taluks* into which the district was divided by the British.

THE NILGIRI POPULATION

When the British began to settle on the plateau they brought with

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

had come (but where epigraphy does not come to our aid), we find a euphonious similarity with the name given to their new Nilgiri hamlet: e.g., So:lu:ru < Su:lu:r. It is as though some refugees still wanted to be reminded of their old homes but dared not be more explicit for fear of attack from the new Moslem rulers of Mysore. If there be any truth to this hypothesis, it provides an interesting instance of adaptive behaviour in a radically new environment. The following is a complete list of all Badaga hamlets for which local legend tells of a place of origin in Mysore; those marked with an asterisk are ones where the factor of euphony may have entered into the naming.[3]

kaggusi < ha:sanu:ru
e:koni < kava:spa:ḍi
*honatale < honhaḷḷi
ki:ru:ru < urigaddige
*hosaṭṭi < honhaḷḷi
me:lu:ru < urigaddige or veḷḷa:di
ebbana:du < urigaddige or ho:sahaḷḷi
*ku:kalu < guṇḍulu-pe:te (pe:te = - market)
kaḍana:ḍu < karahaḷḷi
činna kunnu:r < koṅgaḷḷi
*so:lu:ru < su:lu:r
nunḍuwa < urigaddige
hulikal < honhaḷḷi
ke:ti < koṅgaḷḷi

Two commonly recurring elements in the Badaga toponyms are -u:ru, 'head village', and -haṭṭi, 'hamlet'. Both terms now have specific meanings in Badaga social organization that are not paralleled in Mysore, the haṭṭi being a hamlet, a cluster of contiguous homes, and the u:ru a commune or cluster of contiguous hamlets. There are some 370 hamlets divided among seven communes. Only four of the latter actually bear a toponym ending with -u:ru, however (these names being identical with the head hamlet in each commune). Yet we have seen there are a dozen toponyms ending in -u:ru. Clearly the political organization of Badaga hamlets into thirty-seven communes, and these into three (and more recently four) divisions all under one paramount chief, is an organization that is in its origin more recent than the assigning of names to the hamlets. The Kannaḍa word u:r, 'village', was initially applied by the early settlers to hamlets regardless of any status in a political or administrative hierarchy. The assigning of names to Badaga hamlets was in turn more recent than the actual founding of each hamlet. In the seventeenth

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

Headmen and Administrative Boundaries

631 As we have seen, the Nilgiri Plateau is divided into four areas, Todana:ḍu, Me:kuna:ḍu, Poraṅga:ḍu and Kundena:ḍu.[1] In each of these divisions are several communes,[2] each made up of from one to forty contiguous villages. These villages may belong to any one of the seven plateau phratries, and one of the villages, not necessarily the largest or even of the highest phratry, has permanent precedence and gives its name to the entire commune. Its headman is also head[3] of the entire commune; under him are the headmen[4] of all the other villages. The divisional headman[5] is (413) a hereditary position in one family of a chosen village. From time immemorial the village headman of Tu:ne:ri, in Todana:ḍu, has been paramount chief[6] of the entire Badaga community.[7] Because of the extent of their duties the divisional headmen and the paramount chief do not also serve as headmen at all other levels. (428) All of these offices are normally inherited patrilineally, save when the eldest son is deemed unfit and another relative is chosen by the council to replace him.

692 At each of these levels—village, commune, division and entire (693) community—the relevant headman can call together a council (*manta*) of respected men to judge disputes. Every case has to pass up this hierarchy of councils, so that only when lower councils have failed to solve them satisfactorily do the most complicated land and marriage disputes and murder cases reach the paramount council. A dissatisfied disputant may appeal a council's decision to the next higher level of council, but high-level headmen check that a case brought to them has first passed through the lower-level councils. Badaga law has the unusual provision that if a higher-level headman considers the judgment given at a lower level to be in error he can fine the headman responsible. This was in the past an effective check against favouritism.

Procedure

692 In a dispute between two parties from the same village their 693 headman called a council of the heads of each household, one of whom would be his deputy (*gaundike*). Where litigants came from (622) neighbouring villages the case would first be heard by the commune council, which was made up of all its village headmen.

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

681 The preceding was never a fixed scale of punishments but rather a guide to how an offender would be treated in those times, 'all else being equal'. In each case the punishment could be mitigated according to the circumstances of the crime and the identity of the criminal. A poor man would be fined less than one of the gentry; and any man might plead poverty or haggle with the council to have his fine reduced. This is equally true today.

LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

178 657 Since the start of the last century Badagas were ruled indirectly by the British but contact with them had very little effect in the early years. The Badagas avoided the British legal system and its officers, and their own customary system continued to operate effectively until the end of the century when they subtly adapted their legal thinking to avail themselves of the Imperial system as well.

622 632 657 (631) Village government under the British régime perpetuated the existing hereditary headmen, some of whom received the title of *manegar*. The hierarchy of headmen did not enter into the British scheme for local government however; *manegars* were typically *u:r gaudas*, headmen at the commune level. In the earliest days the British deemed it enough for a *manegar* to be a member of the gentry respected by the Badagas; but by the end of the nineteenth century the role of headman had been split: a *manegar* was appointed in the main communes by the District Collector,[11] while the Badagas still selected their own headmen at both the village and the commune levels.[12] The appointed *manegar* was preferably a literate man, and no longer merely someone with prestige (624) (Grigg, 1880, 366). In addition the British appointed an accountant, the *karnam*, to keep village records. Both of these roles,[13] held by Badagas responsible to an outside authority, were new to Nilgiri society and were not honoured in the spirit expected by the British 622 administration. Grigg, the Collector in 1880, noted with perhaps some exaggeration that

> The vaguest notion of their duties as village magistrate or police officer prevails among the headmen. So far from their understanding that it is their duty to repress such crime, they seem to regard it almost as a sacred duty not only to countenance and

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AN50 Badaga AN50

French-supported film factory and a protein products factory, supposedly to improve farm productivity and employ the pool of Badaga graduates.

MODERN LAWS

Certain pieces of legislation often regarded as milestones in the modernization of Indian society have affected the Badagas very little, and these we need review only briefly.

The Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act, 1856, had no particular effect on Badagas since there was never any interdict against remarriage of their widows. The Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, 1937, has always been ignored by Badagas, and the women have never challenged their traditional treatment: the property is only inherited by males. Nor does the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, receive due recognition from Badagas: marriages are still not always monogamous and are sometimes contracted with grooms below eighteen or brides below fifteen. Kotas and lowland Harijans, although supposedly protected by the Untouchability (Offences) Act, 1955, are never allowed into Badaga temples and are normally served with separate 'untouchable' glasses when they drink at a village teashop. People in Nilgiri villages may not be ignorant of such legislation, but there certainly remains some resistance to the idea of integrating the official system of law and administration into Badaga culture. Even more resistance can be found among the Todas, Kotas and Kurumbas.

NOTES

1. Meaning, respectively, Toda division, Western division, Europeans' division (from *feraṅgi*, 'Franks') and peak division (from Tamil *kuṟṟu*, 'mount'). Why one division should have been named after Europeans is not clear, unless it be a reference to seventeenth-century Jesuits who may have entered this area from Sattiyamaṅgaja and Me:ṭṭupa:ḷaya, where they were then active; Société des Missions-étrangères, 1933, vol. xii, 234–235. The name is certainly ancient. Grigg, 1880, 13, n. 1, and Macleane, 1893, 678, derive this name however from Tamil *periya Raṅga*, 'great god Raṅga,' who is worshipped in this area; see above, p. 127. Throughout the nineteenth century these territorial divisions were adopted by British administrators, but in 1882 they were superceded by the three *taluks* (Gudalur, Outacamund, Coonoor) that are still recognized today.

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
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2. A *commune* can be defined as the smallest administrative unit above the village, consisting of a number of contiguous villages under one headman and council; compare the definition in *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1933, vol. II, 698. The commune used to be found in Serbia, and as the *tambon* it is a basic administrative unit in Thailand; there the headmen of the villages constituting a *tambon* elect one of their number to be commune chief.

3. *u:r gauda*, or *natame*. An exceptional area near De:na:ḍu, on the eastern rim of the plateau, was so isolated and broken in terrain that it was only around 1960 that the nine Toṛea villages there formed a commune and elected a man from Tumbimale as their *u:r gauda;* before that they had recognized as a higher authority the headman of De:na:ḍu, a Wodea who was also the *parpati* (see below, note 5) for Puraṅga:ḍu.

4. *halli gauda;* small villages may do without a headman for years.

5. *parpati*, or *si:me gauda;* Thurston, 1909, vol. I, 80–81.

6. *nu:ku hellu gauda*, often referred to as Tu:ne:ri *Manegar*. (See Plate 4.)

7. Much the same system of headmen has been noted in the South Canara, Coimbatore and Coorg Districts; see, respectively, Thurston, 1909, vol. II, 269–272; Nambiar & Bharathi, 1965, 10, 63; Srinivas, 1965, 57–59.

8. Until some thirty years ago wealthy Badaga households had Badaga serfs, mainly from the poverty-stricken area of Kundena:ḍu, who were children bound to serve for a period of from five years (in the case of pre-puberty girls) to a maximum of twenty-one years (in the case of some youths). In return they received food and housing, and their parents were paid a sum of money. Those in servitude were generally well treated, being like children of the households where they worked. Harkness, 1832, 115, notes they were paid two or three rupees *per annum*.

9. Such divine utterances have not been given credence in this century but oaths have. The scale of oaths, in order of increasing severity, is this: (1) to assert 'it is true!' (2) to pull up some grass with the finger-nails and throw it onto the meeting-ground; (3) to touch the ground with one hand; (4) to put a cloth one is wearing on the ground and step over it; (5) to lay one's child on the ground and step over him—if a false oath, the child will magically die; (6) if non-vegetarian, to sacrifice a goat at the temple; (7) to visit the temple at a set time and swear one's innocence before the god. Divine punishment will fall on whoever breaks such oaths.

10. If after disposal of a case further evidence came to hand the headman could reopen the discussion and perhaps reach a different decision; this might protect him from being fined for a faulty judgment by a higher headman.

11. Grigg, 1880, 366; Natesa Sastri, 1892, 831; Thurston, 1909, vol. I, 79–80. The Collector was always British.

12. These received the title of *sub-manegar* and a small salary from the British administration.

13. Officially these two roles entailed the following: "The head of the village [*manegar*] is the representative of Government in the village. He is the village magistrate and head of the village police. He is the collector of the revenue of the village over which he presides, and has also to perform [miscellaneous small] duties . . . The karnam, who is entrusted with the keeping of village accounts, is subordinate to the head of the village. He should help and advise the head . . . in every way. He is the clerk of the head of the village in his

2: Hockings E-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

abeyance, but until about 1930 they did follow the pattern detailed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Village-and-Town Networks

These more modern networks may roughly be classed as either formal or informal. Formal ties are those that use the recognized channels of local government. Information about personal or legal problems may sometimes be obtained from the *panchayat* office in the next village. A clerk in that office, which is an organ of the state government, will either supply information himself or direct the enquirer to a government office in town (where he will possibly be sent to yet other offices!).

The informal ties between town and village make use of Badaga friends and relatives who work, study or live in the towns, or connect with non-Badagas living in the towns who know where to get information or how to solve a problem. Informal networks are often used by villagers when the formal ones do not resolve a difficulty: this is probably true of many communication systems (Frank, 1958–1959, *passim*).

THE POSITION OF BADAGAS IN NILGIRI SOCIETY

The customary interdependence between the Badagas and other groups is so complex and yet so loose that it has changed to varying extents in different parts of the plateau during this century. Some Badagas are much more dependent than others on the cash economy and usually try to avoid the burden of old obligations. The potentialities of a labour market, nearness of bus routes to town, aboriginal residence patterns and the relative proximity of tribal settlements have all been important in determining the extent to which the Badagas of each village have dropped their traditional ties with the indigenous tribes.

Thus, to cite one example, Badagas of the Kundena:du region tend to be more conservative in outlook than other Badagas: they still invite a Kota band to play at their ceremonies and in other ways keep up their ties with the nearby Kota village. Elsewhere in the Nilgiris the great majority of Badagas eschew contact with Kotas as they now consider it demeaning. A modern Badaga who

4: Hockings E-5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 / Badaga AW50

In the course of the year almost every village celebrates a dozen or so festivals, the most important of which are concerned with the agricultural cycle: *doḍḍa habba*, the Great Festival, which marks the beginning of the agricultural year in November, and *de:va habba*, the God Festival, which celebrates the harvest in July. Another festival, called *Ma:ri habba*, intended to keep smallpox away, is celebrated in a few villages by fire-walking, when selected men walk unscathed across glowing embers. There are many other lesser ceremonies marking certain transitions in the lives of members of the community. For Badagas the major events of life are the naming of a child, its first haircut, the first milking of a cow, marriage, and death. On rare occasions some villages held a huge memorial ceremony in honour of a whole generation of the dead when its last member had passed away, but the ceremony was last performed in 1936. Yet many customs and celebrations of the Badagas are still observed today, in spite of dramatic changes which have affected other parts of their lives.

They are, for example, still led by a paramount chief whose position is hereditary and who always belongs to the village of Tu:ne:ri. (The latest chief was installed in 1977.) The political power devolves from this paramount chief to the headman of each village. In between them there are many local and regional headmen: several neighbouring villages make up a commune and, taking the name of the leading village, come under the authority of that village's headman. Above these there are also four regional chiefs who each control the villages and communes within their quarter of the Nilgiris.

Each headman has his own traditional council. A commune headman has the local village headmen in his council; a regional headman has the commune chiefs in his; and the paramount chief's council (which rarely meets) is composed of all the Badaga headmen. The judicial authority of all of these councils has been much diminished by the gradual imposition of Indian law and lawcourts. The traditional legal procedure for any dispute begins at the village level and then ascends through the various councils until finally an appeal may be considered by the paramount chief. In the past, headmen could impose severe punishments which ranged from ostracism to hanging, but today all criminal offences come under the authority of lawcourts, and village headmen and councils are left to deal only with minor disputes and ceremonial duties.

The Badagas are divided socially into a number of hierarchical

S: Hockings E-5 (1962-1963) 1989
AN50 Badaga AN50

CHAPTER I

THE GEOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL AND ETHNIC SETTING

The Terrain

131 The Nilgiri Hills, once also known as the Blue Mountains, are a plateau some 600 square miles in area, situated in Southern India at the juncture of the three linguistic and cultural areas of Karnatak, Malabar and Tamilnād; or of
•631 modern Mysore, Kerala and Madras States. Today the Nilgiris form one small
101 administrative District of Madras State. They are the homeland of the Badaga, Toda, Kota and Kurumba communities; nowadays many other peoples also live there.

133 The plateau is generally in the altitude range of 6000-8000 feet, and one peak (among the highest in peninsular India) reaches 8640 feet. In contrast with this the western quarter of the District averages around 3000 feet in altitude, and
128 forms a part of the Wynaad Plateau. In this study I use the term Nilgiris in its geographical sense rather than its political one, thereby excluding the Wynaad when I speak of the Nilgiris.

133 The slopes of the Nilgiri Plateau fall away very steeply, and on the eastern
137 edge actually drop some 6000 feet in a distance of less than two miles. The slopes
136 have always been covered by a dense subtropical jungle which harbors tigers, leopards, wild buffaloes, elephants, snakes, malarial mosquitoes, and (formerly
115 dangerous) hunting tribes still feared for their sorcery. Until the advent of the

175 British early in the 19th Century, therefore, the three communities — Badagas, Todas and Kotas — who inhabited the summits of these hills were extremely isolated, and nobody had ever made an effective military conquest of their homeland. With much trepidation a party of the tribal people would venture down to the plains once a year on a trading expedition; but despite this they believed that they were inhabiting a world a little more than a hundred miles square — and so far as their external social contacts were concerned this was quite true.

132 The undulating, unevenly wooded downland which makes up the entire plateau experiences considerable variation in rainfall. The Nilgiris receive from 60 to 160 inches of rain annually, depending on the topographical aspect. The western parts of the plateau rely mainly on the southwest monsoon in July-August; whereas the eastern parts derive much of their rain from the northeastern monsoon in October-December.

The average mean daily temperature in the center of the plateau is around 60°F, while in the Wynaad it is much hotter (and also much wetter). For equability of temperature and for its mildly invigorating qualities the plateau is therefore scarcely rivaled anywhere in the tropics; whereas the Wynaad becomes severely hot in summer, is much less healthy, and is prey to a virulent type of malaria (Arputhanathan 1953: 1-3).

175 177 From the year 1820 the British residents began to take advantage of this healthful setting, and so the towns of Coonoor, Kotagiri and Ootacamund (the District headquarters), as well as the military cantonment of Wellington, gradually took shape and grew. More recently the town of Gudalur has grown up in the 631 Wynaad, at the foot of the escarpment. Ootacamund, Coonoor and Gudalur are now the headquarters of the three administrative regions or <u>taluks</u> into which the

631 District has been divided.

The Inhabitants of the Nilgiris

000 An inscription at Chamrajnagar (near Mysore), dated to 1117 A.D., claims that a Hoysala minister entered the Nilgiris and "frightened the Todas" (Derrett 1957: 47). In 1124 another petty ruler attacked Kulkala, which is perhaps a Kota settlement (kôkî in the Kota language) on the Nilgiri Plateau (Derrett 1957: 60). These two dates provide a terminus ante quem for the settlement of the Toda and perhaps the Kota tribes on the hills.

175 177 In 1602 or 1603 a Portuguese priest visited the plateau -- the first European known to have done so -- and reported in a letter to his superior on his encounters with the Todas and Badagas (Fenicio 1603). And although the jungle tribes of Kurumbas and Irulas are not mentioned in any source prior to Buchanan's report of 1807, there is no ethno-historical reason to suppose that they have not also been in the Nilgiris for at least as long as the Badagas.

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The whole question of the origins of these tribes is undemonstrable archaeologically and quite irrelevant to this study. There is however very strong evidence to support the common belief that the Badagas were not originally a tribe at all (in the popular usage of that word), but rather were descendants of various wanderers or refugees from the old kingdom of Mysore who settled down in the Nilgiris during the period 1400-1800, and were thereby obliged through social pressures to behave like a tribe amongst tribes. The nature of this "tribalization" process will be discussed in the following chapter. Both their origin in Mysore and their complex contacts with the indigenous Nilgiri tribes

197 have molded Badaga culture and social organization markedly. The Badagas still speak a dialect of the Kannada language; whereas the Todas and Kotas each have

121 In summary, there is apparently no single clear or widely accepted distinction between these two terms when they are used as tools of social analysis; and so far as the Nilgiri peoples are concerned, it seems useful to recognize this as a case of a caste society having several indigenous cultures. It certainly seems an unrealistic alternative to describe the Badaga segment of Nilgiri society as a caste and the other segments as tribal.

I thus find myself in the awkward position of not wishing to call the Badagas either tribe, caste or society. On the one hand they are neither wholly tribe nor wholly caste, and on the other they are not a whole society. I will therefore consider them a "community" in the sense that the Wilsons have used the term: an aggregate of people who are to some degree localized in time and space and who manifest a relatively intense common life (Wilson and Wilson 1945: 30). "Community" is a word that is often used, especially in rural sociology, as a synonym for "settlement"; but it is useful to maintain a distinction. We will say that the Badagas are a community of about 400 settlements.

The Badaga Political and Judicial System

•631 For over a century, and perhaps since the earliest Badaga settlement, the whole of the Nilgiris and the Wynaad has been divided up into five regions, for purposes of the indigenous political organization of the inhabitants (Ward 1821: lxi-lxii). In each of the five divisions there live Todas, Kotas, Badagas, Irulas and Kurumbas. The divisional boundaries, together with the modern towns and a few of the major Badaga villages, are shown on the map overleaf (p. 30).

103 (631) The largest in area of these divisions is the westernmost one, called Mallanad (generally shortened to Mallad or Malnad). The word, I was told, means "District of Malla", and was given because it was supposedly first explored

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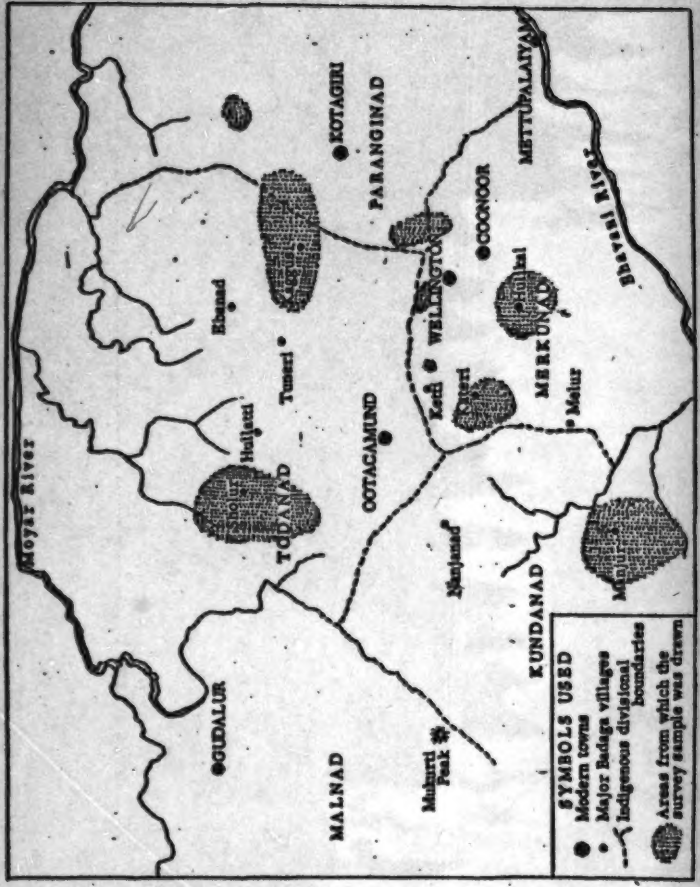

DIAGRAM II: MAP OF THE NILGIRI PLATEAU

by a Toda of that name. (A much more likely derivation is from *mala*, meaning "mountain" in Badagu.) It was a wasteland of jungles which under the British administration was opened up to tea and coffee planters, and came to be called Wynaad. Badagas also use the term Malnad (*mal aṛ*, in Toda) to include the western slopes and mountainous ridge of the Nilgiri Plateau (cf. Burrow & Emeneau 1961: 314). Because the Wynaad is geographically so isolated from the Nilgiris, the Badagas living there operate a separate and rather different system of village government than that existing on the plateau. (We shall not be concerned with their social organization in this study. They are briefly described in Ranga 1934: 25-28.)

The next largest of these political divisions is Todanad, so named because it is mostly the domain of the Todas. This land lies in the western half of the plateau, immediately to the east of Malnad.

In the north-eastern sector of the plateau is Paranginad, a name commonly shortened to Parangad. This division has relatively few Todas, but a thick concentration of Badagas and quite a number of Irula and Kurumba settlements at the lower elevations.

To the south of Paranginad lies another division with a heavy population of Badagas but very few Todas, Merkunad (meaning "Western District").

Directly to the west of Merkunad and on the southern edge of Todanad lies the smallest of these divisions, Kundenad, generally called Kunda. This is apparently the most recently settled of all the divisions, for it alone is not recorded as a division in the earliest British writings about the Nilgiris (Ward 1821: lxi). The terrain is very hilly there, and it was only in the last century that the pressure for land in the rest of the plateau was sufficient to encourage Badaga

•631 colonization of this rather inaccessible area. The recency of its settlement,
[166] when compared with other parts of the Nilgiris, is suggested by the fact that the name of the division lying directly to the east of it is Merkunad -- which means "Western District". It is also common when people are talking about the plateau divisions to use the set phrase, "all the four districts, including Kunda", as though it were somehow exceptional to consider Kunda a district at all.

The fifth division, Malnad, though inhabited by a very few Badagas (or Wynaad Gaudas), Kotas, and -- until 40 years ago -- Todas, is generally thought of by these three tribes as an alien land; and it was certainly not integrated into the indigenous political system in the way that the other four divisions were.

[657] This subdivision of the Nilgiris was taken over by the British for administrative purposes, and continued in use until the early years of the present century, when it was superceded by a redivision of the District into three taluks. The rural inhabitants have however continued to think primarily in terms of their indigenous divisions in matters which involve the Nilgiri-wide social system and its juridical processes.

632 Each of these areas is divided into a number of "villages", usually bet-
(631) ween ten and twenty of them. Each "village" in turn consists of a varying number
(621) of neighboring hamlets belonging normally to any one of the six phratries. One hamlet, not necessarily the largest nor even of the highest-ranked phratry, takes permanent precedence and gives its name to the entire "village".

[162] Thus Ketti, for example, is an average-sized "village" in Merkunad with a Badaga population of about 5000. It consists of 17 hamlets, the chief one
621 being Ketti, largely a Gauda hamlet. On one side of this hamlet there are eleven
615 Toreya houses, and on the other side, separated from the Badagas slightly, are

621 srises. The headman of each chief hamlet is called "village headman", and is
632 responsible for all hamlets in his "village". In each of the four divisions the head-
631 man of one particular "village" is also divisional headman. In Todanad, further-
more, the headman of Tuneri hamlet and "village" -- a Badaga -- is not only divisional headman of Todanad as well, but in addition is "President" of the Nilgiris (i.e. Chief of all Badagas). Similarly, the headman of Balakola hamlet is not only headman of Merkunad division, but is also Vice-President of the Nilgiris. (The terms "president" and "vice-president" have been used here as loose translations of the complicated Badagu terms, and do not reflect any British influence on the local political organization.) For any judgment at the supreme level, both the President and the Vice-President have to take part in the council.

Except under unusual circumstances, including incompetence, these
(428) offices are hereditary at all levels, and are passed from father to eldest son. The
(627) village and divisional boundaries are all inflexible; although before the British land
(648) settlement (the authentication of land holdings, made during the 1880's), neighbor-ing divisions occasionally staked the solution of a boundary dispute on the results of a tug-of-war between mixed teams of Badagas, Todas and Kotas from the two divisions involved.

Traditionally the headman has two kinds of duty to perform: he must take
622 charge of the organization of any festivals and public ceremonies in his hamlet or
632 village, and he must try to settle disputes. Let us consider each of these duties in turn.

Some of the annual festivals are celebrated separately in each hamlet, others are celebrated by a "village" as an entirety. In the first case a hamlet headman would be in charge, and in the second the "village" headman would be.

623 lineage-kin.
(888)

The hamlet council, together with the hamlet headman, is at the lowest
[631] stage in a hierarchy of traditional councils and headmen. Some examples of how these councils work will be given when we discuss the changes they have been subjected to during the present century. We will now explain the working of the hamlet council, however, in broad outline.

Any villager with a dispute must take the matter to his own hamlet headman
612 first, for the consideration of the hamlet council. If the defendant is from another
(622) hamlet, the plaintiff's headman will approach the headman of the other hamlet and
(623) they will arrange a joint council. If one party becomes dissatisfied with the manner
(628) in which the hamlet council has handled the case, or if the hamlet council has been
[632] unable to reach a decision, the case can be passed on to the level of the "village"
692 council. As soon as the "village" headman hears about it, his first task is to
692 enquire whether the case has already been heard by the hamlet council; for, as with the official Indian legal system, no case can come before a higher court before it has passed through the lower-level court. The "village" headman calls together a council consisting of all the hamlet headmen of his "village", as well as various assistants to these headmen and perhaps a few other respected elders. This group
692 constitutes the council at the "village" level. In the same way, the divisional headman can call together a council of all the "village" headmen in his division, or the President of the Nilgiris can call a meeting of all the "village" headmen of all four divisions.

These last two steps are only taken on very rare occasions, especially in the present century, to settle factional disputes which have reached serious proportions without being resolved. The last such meeting was in June, 1957 (Dharma-

615 political divisions of the Nilgiris are relevant in the arrangement of marriages. Gaudas observe a rule that sib exogamy is essential only in marriages arranged
582 between two hamlets within the same division. If a marriage is arranged with a
614 hamlet in any of the other three divisions, and there is no known precedent of a
615 marriage with that hamlet, then it is usually treated as being a member of the
•631 opposite sib, even though it would be possible to argue that it belongs to the same sib, were the villagers to trace out a network of various other marriage connections that indirectly linked the two hamlets. In one's own division, if two hamlets A and B have both had marriages with hamlet C, then A and B necessarily belong to the same sib. But if hamlets A and B are located in different political divisions, then the fact that at some time they have both married people from hamlet C (which might be anywhere in the three other divisions of the Nilgiris) is deemed irrelevant. In fact, where a history of marriage with C could be demonstrated for both A and B, the villagers would usually rationalize the knowledge by saying: "After all, the connection is too distant to matter; we are not marrying our own blood." In effect, they are giving up the ideal of sib exogamy in such a situation for the more
614 meaningful ideal of lineage exogamy, because the sibs have become so large that
615 they can no longer be regarded by Badagas as corporate social groups. This adjustment in thinking is very necessary, because the detailed knowledge Badagas carry of their kinship field -- which often contains 300 or more people -- coupled with the tremendous accumulation of relatives that comes from numerous births and frequent remarriages, could otherwise make the ideal of sib exogamy an altogether insurmountable problem.

There is a second way of manipulating the problem. Various peripheral Gauda hamlets are in a sense of "neutral" sib affiliation, it seems: that is, they

for the real widower to marry a girl capable of adding a number of sons to the family. Thus, provided the previous wife's funeral has been handled in this manner, it is considered ethical for the widower to marry a putative virgin from another family of the gentry.

Generally all of the headmen and headmen's regular assistants belong to the gentry; and during the last century the British officials normally appointed their managers and karnams (i.e. headmen and accountants) from among the gentry too (Grigg 1880: 366).

In keeping with the image of his greater honor, wisdom and prestige, a member of the gentry receives rather different treatment than an ordinary man at the hands of the Badaga judicial council. Traditional Badaga law holds the individual responsible for his acts, and treats him as the offender if he is found guilty of some crime. Among the gentry, on the other hand, the head of the family is responsible for the acts of all members of his family even though he may know nothing about them. This was vividly illustrated by a case in 1963, which I will quote from my field-notes.

"Belli is the traditional headman of a Badaga hamlet and, as he is the eldest of several brothers, he is also head of his family, which is considered a gentry family. One day he met his friend Lingan, a prominent elder from the neighboring hamlet. They were on a footpath in the fields belonging to Lingan's people. Without any prior explanation or greeting, Lingan abused Belli roundly for his despicable behavior. Belli was taken aback, and questioned him about the meaning of this outburst. He thus learned that one of his brothers had just kicked a Tamilian boy employed by the neighboring hamlet to look after their cattle. Normally Lingan would not have concerned himself with a minor hurt done to a non-Badaga in his hamlet; but in this case, because the boy was employed by the hamlet

578 (657) insults and personal grievances. As we shall see, the fact that in-group solidarity is so strongly manifested in disputes ostensibly between two individuals is a common psychological basis for the growth of Badaga factional divisions, which typically evolve out of family feuds.

554 •631 (621) (565) Historically and to some extent socially the hamlet can be seen as an extension of its gentry, its founding family: Tuneri, for example, is said to be an important village <u>because</u> its headman is the most important of all Nilgiri headmen. This is an understandable position, for every resident of Tuneri is potentially more influential than people living in a hamlet with a relatively inferior headman. But Tuneri is also an unusually large village, and this fact gives it added prestige. In the same way that a family of the gentry used to increase in prestige by increasing its numbers, a hamlet can do likewise by an increase in population. This is simply because, in the traditional setting, the headman would receive more money gifts at the weddings of girls from his village, more income from fining his villagers, and the chance of a substantial "rake-off" when he collected grain to give to the Todas and Kurumbas at each harvest. This attitude finds clear expression in a Badaga saying: "If the number of his subjects increases, the headman of the village will become a big man."

631 661 662 During the last century, before Badagas had started to use the British court system (there was only one magistrate's court in the Nilgiris), they were entirely dependent on their own headmen for favorable treatment in the hearing of disputes. In those days, whenever a headman visited another village, he could expect much more generous hospitality than he would receive today, since it might prove necessary later to look to him for support in a case. The hospitable treatment typically consisted of a big feast, to which was often added a night with whichever of the village girls he chose. Feasting, girls, cloth and money might also be

•631 used prior to the hearing of a dispute to gain an adjudicating headman's favor.
661
662 Within prescribed limits, antisocial behavior is an individual's misfortune, rather than a reflection on the character of his lineage or hamlet. In the case of
558 misbehavior by a member of the gentry, however, the prestige of his whole family
[565] is involved. Apart from the small minority -- perhaps five percent -- who belong to the gentry, as we have seen, wrong-doers are held responsible for their own acts and punishable for them. A family which contains a miscreant or a girl of loose morals will generally lose little prestige; for, as a proverb understandingly puts the matter, "In good soil the crop will grow better, and so will the weeds." For this reason the family of a man hanged for murder, for example, would still give him a respectful funeral and invite many guests (who would show no hesitation in coming). The same holds true in the case of a man who died as a Hindu after having earlier been a Christian convert. If, on the other hand, any lineage pro-
558 613 duces more than two or three miscreants or notably loose women within a space of a few years, then the whole lineage does lose prestige and influence. The isolated case can be overlooked, but repeated delinquency within one lineage becomes difficult to pardon.

To summarize the chapter thus far: we have seen that an upper class of
565 families exists, consisting of certain patrilineal descendants of the Badagas who founded each settlement. These families provided the headmen and sometimes other functionaries; they still try to maintain an image of higher ethical standards and greater prosperity and power; but at the same time the entire family can be held responsible for the misdeeds of any member, whereas among other Badagas this is not usually so.

177 Until the end of the last century Badagas sedulously avoided the British
178 legal system and its officers. The traditional Badaga system, which we described
earlier (pp. 29-43), continued to operate effectively. In the following chapter we
121 shall describe the social change which came about during the present century when
Badagas were obliged to adapt their legal system so as to make use of the official
Indian one too.

657 Local government under the British was in practice confined for the most
(631) part to the municipalities. Some police stations were established in rural areas,
(625) and local roads were constructed; but in general there was little attempt to im-
(871) prove the lot of the Badagas. In a few villages the presence of free mission
schools from 1857 onward nevertheless did much to raise the standard of educa-
tion (cf. Grigg 1880: 423-26).

After independence, on the other hand, the Indira government began to pay a great deal of attention to developing the rural sector of the country. The Nilgiris was not selected for inclusion in the areas subjected to intensive community development in the early 1950's, but local panchayat offices were set up in the administrative "villages" of the Nilgiris, and began the dissemination of information and the improvement of basic services. The Badagas were classified as a "Backward Class" and received special help in these matters from the Harijan
(312) Welfare Department. Today most villages, as a result of these efforts, have a
(491) fairly hygienic supply of running tap-water, a track connecting them with the main
(365) roads, and an electricity supply. Many villages have started their own coopera-
(474) tive society, through which they get loans and agricultural supplies against the
security of their lands or houses.

177 Certain pieces of legislation often regarded as milestones in the recent

6: Noble K-4,5 (1962-1963) 1989
(1800-1963)
AW50 Badaga AW50
Kota AW55
Kurumba AW56
Toda AW60
Madras Tribes AW63
Kasuva

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

121 Little was known of the people inhabiting the Nilgiri District, southern India, until Francis Buchanan visited the District in 1800. Since that time, five ethnic groups have been mentioned repeatedly in the writings of other visitors to the District. Using the interrelated criteria of occupance patterns, occupance forms, and economies, this study surveys and analyzes the cultural contrasts and similarities exhibited by the five groups. Because significant changes have occurred since 1800, the historical perspective is applied to the three criteria whenever possible. A study in depth, by its very nature, contributes to an understanding of factors causing cultural contrasts and similarities among the five ethnic groups in the early 1800s, and of factors leading to changes since then.

1. The Study Region and Five Ethnic Groups

131 (101) (631) The study region. The Badagas, Irulas, Kotas, Kurumbas, and Todas, who form the main subjects of this study, live within the Nilgiri District of Madras State. The District lies approximately west-southwest from Madras city, the capital of Madras State, and is 131 133 less than 50 miles east of Calicut, the southern Indian port reached by Vasco da Gama in 1498 (Figure 1). The Nilgiri massif, with several peaks higher than 8,000 feet, dominates much of the District. However, a part of the District extends over the Wynaad Plateau to

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 31]

6: Noble K-4,5 (1962-1963) 1989
(1800-1963)

AW50 Badaga AW50
Kota AW55
Kurumba AW56
Toda AW60
Madras Tribes AW63
Kasuva

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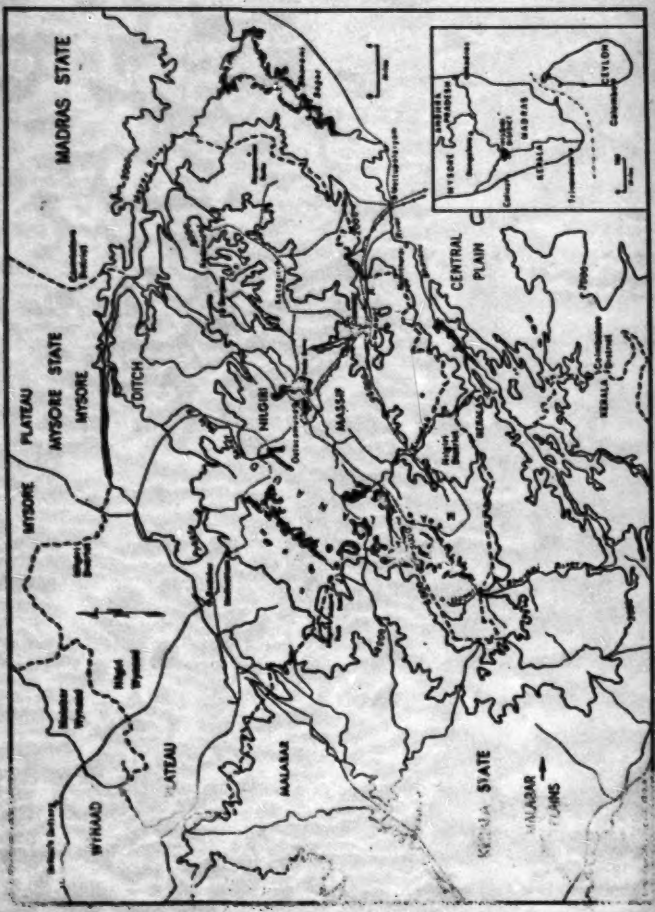

131 the northwest and into a broad valley called the Mysore Ditch to the
133 north. The eastern slopes of the Nilgiri massif rise above the Central Plain of peninsular India, and the western slopes rise above Malabar plains. The Wynaad Plateau, partially bordered by Western Ghats mountains, lies above the Malabar plains and emerges with the Mysore Plateau to the northeast. The Nilgiri District is bordered by Mysore and
177 Kerala states, and the general region wherein the District lies has
(131) long been a contact zone where Kannada-speaking, Malayalam-speaking, and Tamil-speaking southern Indians have met and, on occasion, fought. Despite past wars, nominal control by different rulers, and the fact that the Nilgiri region is near some of the Malabarian ports associated with earliest European contacts, the region had remained relatively isolated until Englishmen started to settle on the Nilgiri massif in the early 1820s.

The English first used the massif as a health resort, but they later established many coffee and tea plantations in the Nilgiri District. The District is now the leading tea growing region and the fifth ranking coffee growing region in southern India (United Planters
177 Association of Southern India 1960: 390). Ootacamund, in the middle
• 631 of the Nilgiri massif, grew into the central administrative and resort city with over 50,000 people in 1961. The next two cities in size are Coonoor (over 30,000) to the southeast and Kotagiri (over 15,000) to the east of Ootacamund. Both are early resort centers which even-
631 tually also served the needs of the coffee and tea industries. Smaller Gudalur (over 8,000), in the northwestern portion of the District, is the administrative center for the Nilgiri Wynaad and caters to local

6: Noble K-4,S (1962-1963) 1989
(1800-1963)
AN50 Badaga AN50
Kota AN55
Kurumba AN56
Toda AN60
Madras Tribes AN63
Kasuva

631 plantations (Nambiar 1965: 58-60).

491 The Nilgiri urban centers are connected by a road network (Figure 1). The main ghat (pass) roads converging on Ootacamund run from 1) Mettupalaiyam, in the Coimbatore District, through Coonoor, 2) Mettupalaiyam through Kotagiri, 3) Nilambur in Malabar, Kerala State, through Gudalur, and 4) Mysore, beyond the map in Mysore State, through Gudalur. The northern Sigur ghat road, which is a seldom used short cut running from the Mysore road to the Gudalur-Ootacamund road, 496 is very steep in places. A narrow-guage railroad, on which central racks and cogs must be used for braking on the steepest gradients, runs from Mettupalaiyam to Coonoor and Ootacamund.

000 The three main industrial establishments in the Nilgiri District are the Government of India Cordite Factory near Coonoor, the Needle Industries (India) Ltd. farther up the road to Ootacamund, and the Hindustan Photo Films Manufacturing Company near Ootacamund. The first two establishments were founded during the period of English occupation, but construction of the third did not commence until 1962.

An important post-English, i.e., post-1947, development is the Kundah Hydroelectric Scheme, undertaken by the Madras Government and aided by Canadians under the Colombo Plan. In this scheme, probably completed by now, eight dams, several inter-reservoir tunnels, and five powerhouses were to be constructed mainly within the drainage basins of the Upper Bhavani and Kundah rivers in the southwestern Nilgiris. The Pykara Hydroelectric Scheme, begun by the English in 1929, was enlarged and completed recently. Three dammed reservoirs in the Pykara and Sandy Nala valleys west of Ootacamund, penstocks

who fled from that situation and settled on the hills as Badagas (i.e., "northerners") came mainly from the agricultural Okkaliga caste in the Mysore Plain. What their social organization may have been there is obscure and irrelevant. It seems that the small groups of refugees, torn from their caste affiliations, were so fragmented that the basic social unit among them as settlers was the joint family, not the *jati* or caste. It is still the ideal residential unit.

Today we find no castes in Badaga society. These people live in a tribal milieu, surrounded by the indigenous Toda, Kota, Kurumba, and Iruḷa tribes, and they have become fairly tribe-like themselves. The community is divided into ten phratries which are mainly endogamous. Two of these are vegetarian; all are primarily agricultural. Each phratry is made up of a number of exogamous clans, anything from two to sixteen of them, and these clans are in turn segmented into quite a few exogamous lineages. As with the famed Nigerian case of the Tallensi, there are actually lineages within lineages, so that we may need to speak about maximal (*kuḍumbu*), major (*kutti*), minor (*kutti*), and minimal (*guppu*) lineages, even though not every clan currently has all four levels of lineage. Segments of the minimal lineages are in fact extended families, counting back for about five generations, and with most of their members still alive.

These larger social units have a complicated history and organization (detailed in Hockings 1980), and they will not be considered further in this present study. It is nonetheless relevant to mention how they fit into the residence pattern. The Badagas live in about 370 exclusively Badaga villages which are normally exogamous. Marriage is virilocal. Each village is thus the home of one or more patrilineages all belonging to one clan (and hence, one phratry). But with few exceptions a clan is not confined to a single village.

One particular village, Tu:ne:ri, was the first place to be settled, in the late 16th century, as a result of which its headman became the paramount chief. This position, like all Badaga headmanships, has descended patrilineally within the family. Every other village has its own headman, descended from the founder, and clusters of neighbouring villages form a commune around one particular village whose headman is also acknowledged to be the commune headman. Furthermore, the whole of the plateau area has been divided into four quarters, and one man is recognized as the regional headman in each quarter. At every one of the four levels of headmanship there is also a council, made up of inferior headmen (except in the case of the village council, which consists of lineage elders who work with the traditional village headman).

The society is relatively homogeneous in the sense that, although the ten phratries are ranked into a widely accepted hierarchy, all families were traditionally subsistence farmers of millet and all lived by essentially the same kinship rules. We will therefore be able to explore the meaning of these rules without constant reference to exceptions and alternatives found only in certain sectors of the society.

9: Natesa Sastri U-5 (no date) 1892
AW50 Badaga AW50

101 dynasty of Madura. To these Nâyakkas or Vaḍugas the Baḍagas were allied, and they were thus originally the Śûdras of the Maisûr
174 country. They were, however, completely Âryanised before they commenced their march three centuries ago to the district where
[101] they now live, and it is therefore not surprising that they should have brought with them many of the ancient Âryan institutions.

620 Chief among these may be noted the system of local self-government that even yet exists among them though in an impaired form. From the traces that are still left it is evident that the village community system prevailed among them in a complete state in the old days of their settlement on the Nîlagiris.

622 Each village has a head man called the Monegar. He is gene-
(554) rally the richest man in the village, and is regarded as the highest authority upon all subjects. Before the year 1820, while the
(175) Nîlagiri district had not yet been made a separate district but only formed a single tâlûk in the Coimbatore district, the power of
(631) these Monegars was much greater than it is now. At that time communication was difficult and much of the Nîlagiris had not yet been opened up, and in the different villages the Monegar was the paramount power. Stories are current even to the present day of a Monegar of one village who ordered an individual who had disobeyed his orders to be covered with a slab of stone. Unless the disobedience was of a most flagrant nature and really amounted to a determined disregard of constituted authority, such a high-handed exercise of autocratic power must have been resented by the people, for the Monegar was not an irresponsible autocrat, but a
(631) ruler holding his power by the goodwill of the whole community. The British Government has made these Monegars officials in connection with the revenue administration of the villages, but apart from this they still have certain important duties to perform in connection with the social life of the Baḍaga community. In all religious and social questions the Baḍagas go to the village Monegar. If the question is a simple one he settles it himself, if it is intricate he calls a village council to which the elders of the village are summoned. After taking their opinion he passes an order which must be obeyed, for his word is law.

622 Questions of partition, of cultivation and of outcasting, disputes
623 and other minor matters, are thus settled by the village council with the Monegar as its head. It is, however, in questions arising in
(627) connexion with marriage that the Monegar and his council play
584 their most important part. When a girl in one village is going to